What Lent Is. The annual observance of Lent is the special season for the ascent to the holy mountain of Easter. Through its twofold theme of repentance and baptism, the season of Lent disposes both the catechumens and the faithful to celebrate the paschal mystery. Catechumens are led to the sacraments of initiation by means of the rite of election, the scrutinies and catechesis. The faithful, listening more intently to the word of God and devoting themselves to prayer, are prepared through a spirit of repentance to renew their baptismal promises (Ceremonial of Bishops #249).

During Lent Catechumens and the Faithful are on parallel journeys at different levels. For Catechumens Lent is a period of purification and enlightenment, a time to examine their lives in light of the Gospel catechesis they have received in the catechumenate and thereby to ready themselves for full sacramental initiation.

For the Faithful, it is a time to ready themselves to reaffirm truthfully and with integrity their baptismal promises. This means that during Lent the Faithful should seek conversion from anything in their lives which is in conflict with who they are supposed to be as fully initiated Christians. That Lent is a season of return to one’s baptismal commitment for fully initiated Catholics (and baptized candidates in RCIA) is indicated by the placement of the rituals of distributing ashes at the beginning of Lent and the sprinkling with water of the initiated at Easter. During Lent we rise from the death of sin (represented by the ashes) to new life as we are recommitted to our baptismal promises.

PRAYER, FASTING AND ALMSGIVING: THE HEART OF LENTEN PREPARATION
(From USCCB, “Penitential Practices for Today’s Catholic”).

Prayer, that process of listening to and responding to God’s daily call, sustains and nurtures our relationship with our triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Without prayer, personal and communal, this relationship is diminished, sometimes to the point of complete silence on our part. Every day the Spirit of Jesus invites us to enter into that serious conversion that leads to blessed communion.

Fasting, a very special form of penance, and Jesus’ second call, has been a consistent part of our Catholic tradition. Fasting assists us in getting our own house in order. All of us have to deal with areas of servitude, whether in regard to smoking or alcohol consumption, misused sexuality, uncontrolled gambling, psychological hang-ups, spiritual obsessions, use of stimulants, immoderate use of the Internet, excessive amounts of television watching, or preoccupations with other forms of entertainment. By fasting and self-denial, by living lives of moderation, we have more energy to devote to God’s purposes and a better self-esteem that helps us to be more concerned with the well-being of others.

Voluntary fasting from food creates in us a greater openness to God’s Spirit and deepens our compassion for those who are forced to go without food. The discomfort brought about by fasting unites us to the sufferings of Christ. Fasting should bring to mind the sufferings of all those for whom Christ suffered. One may refrain from certain foods strictly for dietary purposes, but this would not be Christian penance. Rather, our fasting and refraining is in response to the workings of the Holy Spirit. By fasting we sense a deeper hunger and thirst for God. In a paradoxical way, we feast through fasting—we feast on the spiritual values that lead to works of charity and service. Did not the prophet Isaiah proclaim that such works characterize the fasting that God desires?

Almsgiving. The third call of the Lord is to give alms. Jesus was always concerned about those who were poor and in need. He was impressed by the widow who, though having so little, shared her resources with others: “I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest; for those others have made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood” (Lk 21:3-4). To be a disciple of Christ means to live a life of charity. To be a disciple of Jesus is to live a life of stewardship, generously giving of our time, talent, and treasure.

Our Lord’s threefold call to pray, to fast,
and to give alms is richly interconnected. In prayer the Holy Spirit, always active in our lives, shows us those areas where we are not free—areas that call for penance—as well as those people who are in need of our care. Through fasting, our spirit becomes more open to hearing God’s call, and we receive new energies for performing works of charity. Almsgiving puts us in contact with the needy whom we then bring back to God in prayer.

ASH WEDNESDAY Blessing and Distribution of Ashes

In the Roman Rite, the beginning of the forty days of penance is marked with the austere symbol of ashes which are used in the Liturgy of Ash Wednesday. The use of ashes is a survival from an ancient rite according to which converted sinners submitted themselves to canonical penance. The act of putting on ashes symbolizes fragility and mortality, and the need to be redeemed by the mercy of God. Far from being a merely external act, the Church has retained the use of ashes to symbolize that attitude of internal penance to which all the baptized are called during Lent. The faithful who come to receive ashes should be assisted in perceiving the implicit internal significance of this act, which disposes them towards conversion and renewed Easter commitment (Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy #125).

The Blessing and Imposition of Ashes

When: takes place only on Ash Wednesday only, ordinarily during the celebration of the Eucharist.

Rite to be Used: The Roman Missal contains the Rite for the Blessing and Distribution of Ashes within Mass. The Order for the Blessing and Distribution of Ashes outside of Mass is found in the Book of Blessings (#1656-1678). If the Eucharist is not celebrated, the blessing and distribution is to take place within the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word. The distribution of ashes outside of either Mass or a Liturgy of the Word is to be strongly discouraged, because the liturgy provides a proper context for the understanding of the distribution of ashes.

The minister for the blessing and distribution of ashes: within the Mass is a bishop or priest. The minister for the blessing of ashes during a Liturgy of the Word is a bishop, priest or deacon. Other persons may be associated with the bishop or priest or deacon in the imposition of ashes: e.g. extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, and other lay persons, when there is a true pastoral need. These persons do not, however, bless the ashes.

Ashes for the sick: Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may bring blessed ashes to the sick and those confined to their homes. If a minister is not available, a member of the family or another person may bring blessed ashes to a shut-in, using one of the formulas in the Roman Missal to impose the ashes. In parallel to the Rite of Communion for the Sick, the distribution of ashes to the sick should be celebrated in the context of a brief Liturgy of the Word.

SUNDAY READINGS DURING LENT

Gospel Readings for the first two Sundays of Lent are respectively the accounts of Jesus’ temptation in the desert and the Transfiguration. Matthew’s account of Jesus’ temptation parallels Luke’s and both are more expansive than Mark’s version. This indicates that it is taken from “Q”, the source common to Matthew and Luke. In the flight to and return from Egypt (Matt 2:13-23) Jesus has already been presented as the “new, true Israel.” Whereas the Israelites traversing the desert succumbed to temptation by testing God and worshiping a false god, Jesus is depicted as triumphing over similar temptations. He does so by invoking the Law, whose authentic interpreter he will show himself to be in the course of the narrative. The main point of this narrative is to show Jesus as the authentic and obedient Son of God.

In Matthew’s transfiguration scene, the disciples are given a preview of Jesus as risen Lord, and through his death and resurrection he will show himself to be the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, as is indicated by the presence of Moses and Elijah.

On Sundays 3, 4, and 5 of Lent in Cycle A the pericopes about Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, the healing of the man born blind and the raising of Lazarus, all from John’s Gospel are read. Since the time of the early Church these Gospel readings have spoken to the spiritually life-giving process catechumens experience as they journey toward initiation at Easter. Jesus provides living water for their thirst, sight for their blindness and the gift of eternal life which comes through faith in him.

First Readings. The Old Testament readings are about the history of salvation, which is one of the themes proper to the catechesis of Lent. The series of texts for each Year presents the main elements of salvation history from its beginning until the promise of the New Covenant (General Introduction to the Lectionary #97).

Second Readings. The readings from the Letters of the Apostles have been selected to fit the Gospel and the Old Testament readings and, to the extent possible, to provide a connection between them (Ibid.).

Laetare Sunday

The fourth Sunday of Lent gets its name from the Entrance Antiphon, which in the third edition of the Roman Missal in English reads, “Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.” It is a day of quiet joy.

The reason for joy at this point in this otherwise penitential season is given in the Collect for the day. At this halfway point of Lent the liturgical assembly is urged to “hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come.” We look forward joyfully to celebrating the Paschal Triduum, wherein we celebrate the salvation Christ won for us. Presiders and deacons may wear rose colored
should not be understood as limiting the certain days as obligatory days of penance Fridays of Lent. The determination of Wednesday, Good Friday and on all by all Catholics 14 years or older on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Abstinence from meat:

**FASTING AND ABSTINENCE**

When Observed: Fasting is to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. By Whom?: by all Catholics who are 18 years of age (“have attained their majority, Code of Canon Law, Canon 1252) but not yet 59 (“until the beginning of their sixtieth year,” Ibid.). What Constitutes Fasting?: Those who are bound to fast may take only one full meal. Two smaller meals are permitted if necessary to maintain strength according to each one’s needs, but eating solid foods between meals is not permitted.

Abstinence from meat: is to be observed by all Catholics 14 years or older on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and on all Fridays of Lent. The determination of certain days as obligatory days of penance should not be understood as limiting the occasions for Christian penance.

**MAINTAINING THE SPIRIT OF THE SEASON OF LENT**

The Spirit of the season of Lent should be maintained throughout the weeks of Lent. The obligation to observe penitential days of the Church is a very important part of our spiritual life. Individual circumstances must be taken into account, but in general, people should seek to do more rather than less, since fast and abstinence on the days prescribed should be considered a minimal response to the Lord’s call to penance and conversion of life.

**DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME**

Pastors are reminded that daylight savings time this year will begin at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 8, 2020 which is the Second Sunday of Lent.

**WEDDINGS, BAPTISMS, AND FUNERALS**

**WEDDINGS**

Weddings are discouraged during the season of Lent, and prohibited during the Easter Triduum, or on Holy Saturday after the Vigil. If a wedding must be celebrated during Lent “couples are to be reminded that wedding plans should respect the special nature of this inaugural season; they should refrain from too much pomp or display (Order of Celebrating Matrimony #32).

**BAPTISMS**

Infant Baptisms during Lent: While Baptisms during Lent are discouraged in normative circumstances, it nonetheless remains the prerogative of the pastor after consultation with the parents to decide on celebrating a baptism during Lent.

**FUNERALS**

On Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday: Funerals may be celebrated on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, but not within the context of Mass. The Eucharist may not be distributed at a funeral on these days.

**Covering of Crosses and Images:** This is not to be done through the entirety of Lent. Crosses and images in Churches may be covered (although this is not required) beginning with the Fifth Sunday of Lent. Crosses remain covered until the end of the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday. Images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.

**Eucharistic Prayers**

During the season of Lent, the two Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation may be used with their proper prefaces, with Lenten prefaces or with prefaces which refer to penance and reconciliation.

**EVENING MASS**

The oblation in the Mass is to be done with the words “I present this offering…” so that after the prostration the people, standing, may recite together the prayer “Grant, we beseech thee, O Lord…”

**Gospel Acclamations:** “During the season of Lent, alternate acclamations [to the Alleluia] with their proper verse are used, as found in the Lectionary for Mass (or,
The Scrutinies should take place within
Scrutinies sacraments discernment of God's call and election of
acknowledges the community's
3:00 PM. This liturgical moment publicly acknowledges the community’s discernment of God’s call and election of the catechumenate, a
rite of sending the catechumens to their election by the bishop may be celebrated in parishes wherever this seems beneficial or desirable (RCIA §106).

Rite of Election: is celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent. This year it will take place at St. Joseph Co-Cathedral, Thibodaux, at 3:00 PM. This liturgical moment publicly acknowledges the community’s discernment of God’s call and election of the catechumenate for the paschal sacraments (RCIA §120).

Scrutinies

The Scrutinies should take place within
the ritual Masses “Christian Initiation: The Scrutinies,” which are celebrated on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent; the readings with their chants are those given for these Sundays in the lectionary for Mass, Year A (RCIA §146). The Ritual Masses for the Celebration of the Scrutinies (Roman Missal) may be used on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays if there are catechumens going through the Scrutinies.

Presentations

The Creed. The first presentation to the elect is the presentation of the Creed, during the week following the first scrutiny. The elect are to commit the Creed to memory and they will recite it publicly (nos. 193-196) prior to professing their faith in accordance with that Creed on the day of their baptism (RCIA §148). The presentation of the Creed is done during the week following the first scrutiny.

The Lord’s Prayer. Presentation of the Lord’s Prayer is done during the week following the third scrutiny (RCIA §149).

Holy Saturday Preparation Rites

Ephphatha Rite impresses on the elect their need of grace in order that they may hear the word of God and profess it for their salvation (RCIA §197).

Choosing a Baptismal Name. The elect may choose a new name, which is either a traditional Christian name or a name of regional usages that is not incompatible with Christian beliefs (RCIA §200).

For Candidates

All of the Lenten rites are optional for baptized candidates. However, these rites are provided because the candidates often have a need for the benefits the rites offer.

Sending Candidates for Recognition by
the Bishop and for the Call to Continuing Conversion: This optional rite is provided for parishes whose candidates seeking to complete their Christian initiation or to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church will be recognized by the bishop in a subsequent celebration (for example at the cathedral with the bishop) (RCIA §434).

Call to Continuing Conversion. This rite may be celebrated with baptized but previously uncatechized adults who wish to complete their Christian initiation through the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist or who wish to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church...This penitential rite may be celebrated on the Second Sunday of Lent or on a Lenten weekday (RCIA § 459, 462).

Penitential Rite. [A] penitential rite can serve to mark the Lenten purification of baptized but previously uncatechized adults who are preparing to receive the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist or to be received into the full communion of the Catholic Church....This penitential rite may be celebrated on the Second Sunday of Lent or on a Lenten weekday (RCIA § 459, 462).

P A L M S U N D A Y O F T H E P A S S I O N O F T H E L O R D

Holy Week begins on "Passion (or P a l m ) S u n d a y " which joins the foretelling of Christ’s regal triumph and the proclamation of the passion. The connection between both aspects of the Paschal Mystery should be shown and explained in the celebration and catechesis of this day.

29. The commemoration of the entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem has, according to ancient custom, been celebrated with a solemn procession, in which the faithful in song and gesture imitate the Hebrew children who went to meet the Lord singing "Hosanna."

The procession may take place only once, before the Mass which has the largest
HOLY WATER

Holy water should be removed from the fonts on Holy Thursday immediately before the Mass of the Lord’s Supper. The fonts are to remain empty until after the Easter Vigil Mass (Ordo). It is not appropriate for the fonts to be filled with sand or other materials.

GLORIA AND RINGING BELLS

During the singing of the hymn ‘Gloria in excelsis,’ in accordance with local custom, the bells may be rung but should thereafter remain silent until the ‘Gloria in excelsis’ of the Easter Vigil, unless the conference of bishops or the local ordinary, for a suitable reason, has decided otherwise. During the same period, the organ and other musical instruments may be used only for the purpose of supporting the singing (Paschale Solemnitatis #50).

PRESENTATION OF THE HOLY OILS

It is appropriate that the oils blessed and consecrated at the Chrism Mass be carried in as part of the entrance procession and presented before the beginning of the Mass of the Lord’s Supper or on another day after the Chrism Mass (RM, Chrism Mass 15). The proper rubrics and prayers for the presentation of the oils are attached in a subsequent section.

Disposal of old oils: The oils from the previous year are to be disposed of by burning (BB, 1127). They may be burned in the Easter fire or in another lamp. If the oils cannot be burned, they may be buried in a place unlikely to be disturbed. If you have any of the small bottles in which you received the oils in previous years, please return them to the Cathedral.

WASHING OF THE FEET

The washing of the feet (mandatum) should be characterized by simplicity and reverence. Care should be taken that this optional rite does not take on an exaggerated importance. It also should be celebrated in an authentic manner which allows for people to participate visually (CDWDS).

Minister of the Washing of Feet: The action of foot washing is to be carried out by the priest.

Those Chosen to Participate: Any number of participants may be invited. “…pastors may select a small group of the faithful to represent the variety and the unity of each part of the people of God. Such small groups can be made up of men and women, and it is appropriate that they consist of people young and old, healthy and sick, clerics, consecrated men and women and laity.” It is inappropriate to wash the feet of the entire congregation. This does not carry out the meaning of the ritual. (CDWDS, Explanatory note on Missa in Cena Domini).

Other Rites or Statements of Commitment: Other rites or statements of commitment are not appropriate for Holy Thursday.

No Variations on the Rite of Washing of Feet: Please note that variations to this rite are not permitted, e.g., washing of hands.

TRANSFER OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT

Procession: Following the prayer after Communion, the priest puts the humeral veil on over the chasuble and the Blessed Sacrament is transferred to the place of reposition. The procession to the place of reposition should take a direct route and should not take on the character of a Corpus Christi procession, e.g., the rubrics do not call from the use of a canopy (RM, Holy Thursday 38).

Tabernacle on Altar of Repose: There should be a specially prepared tabernacle in a place apart from the main tabernacle. Parishes with existing Eucharistic chapels outside of the body of the main church may repose the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle there. The place of reposition should be simply decorated (Paschalis Solemnitatis #49).